

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USUN N 01483 100329Z

44

ACTION IO-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 1483

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UNSC, PINR, PT, PO, ID

SUBJ: PORTUGUESE TIMOR: COMMENTS OF MR. & MRS. REX K.M.

SYDDELL

REF: JAKARTA 4039 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRALIAN FARMER REX K.M. SYDDELL AND HIS WIFE, MRS. JANE SYDDELL, WHO HAVE SPENT PART OF THEIR TIME DURING RECENT YEARS IN EAST TIMOR AND WHO HAVE DENOUNCED FRETELIN ACTIONS IN EAST TIMOR (REFTEL) ARE IN NEW YORK. INDONESIA'S MISSION HAS INTRODUCED THEM TO REPRESENTATIVES OF A NUMBER OF MISSION OF COUNTRIES ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC). IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER OR NOT INDONESIANS WILL EMPLOY THEM IN FORTHCOMING UNSC DEBATE. END SUMMARY.

2. USUN REPRESENTATIVE WAS INVITED TO MEET THE SYDDELLS BY INDONESIA'S MINISTER JOEWONO AT INDONESIA'S MISSION ON
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 USUN N 01483 100329Z

APRIL 2. MR. AND MRS. SYDDELL SPOKE QUITE CALMLY AND

UNEMOTIONALLY ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS OF EAST TIMOR.

3. MR. SYDDELL SAID HE HAD SPENT MANY YEARS IN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SERVICE. MRS. SYDDELL HAS BEEN A TRAINED NURSE FOR DECADES. HE MENTIONED DUTY IN KENYA, THE SEYCHELLES, AND NEW GUINEA. HE SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WORK HAD BEEN OF A "DIPLOMATIC" CHARACTER. ON RETIREMENT, HE TURNED TO LIVESTOCK FARMING NEAR DARWIN WHERE HE HAS A FARM. HE WENT TO PORTUGUESE TIMOR SOME EIGHT YEARS AGO AT "INVITATION OF PORTUGUESE" TO HELP WITH AGRICULTURE. SINCE THEIR MARRIAGE SEVEN YEARS AGO, THE SYDDELLS HAVE TRAVELLED BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND TIMOR. IN TIMOR, THEY SAID THEY TRIED TO HELP AGAINST INCREDIBLE BACKWARDNESS.

4. BOTH SYDDELLS CONDEMNED PORTUGAL'S CENTURIES-LONG INDIFFERENCE TOWARD THIS REMOTE COLONY. HE SPOKE OF RECENT PILLAGE OF SANDALWOOD STANDS BY AN AVARICIOUS GOVERNOR. HE DEPLORED "INCOMPETENCE AND CORRUPTION" ON PART OF PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATORS OF THIS TERRITORY WHICH SERVED AS "DUMPING GROUND, PENAL COLONY, AND PLACE OF EXILE." SHE CITED AN ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF MEDICAL FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL UNDER PORTUGAL'S ADMINISTRATION.

5. HE WAS EQUALLY CONDEMNATORY OF FRETELIN AND PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA SUPPORTING FRETELIN.

6. ACCORDING TO SYDDELL, FRETELIN LEADER (FOREIGN MINISTER) HORTA LIED WHEN HE TOLD AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC THAT FRETELIN MIGHT INCLUDE A "FEW MAOISTS" BUT WAS ESSENTIALLY NON-COMMUNIST. SYDDELL ASSERTED THAT HORTA WAS A COMMUNIST, INDOCTRINATED FOR TWO YEARS IN MOSCOW AND TRAINED IN MOZAMBIQUE, WHO HAD SPENT MUCH MORE TIME IN HIS NATIVE PORTUGAL THAN IN TIMOR. SYDDELL SAW MUCH SOVIET INFLUENCE IN FRETELIN. NUMEROUS FRETELIN LEADERS WERE TRAINED IN PORTUGAL'S FORMER AFRICAN TERRITORIES. HE SAID THAT, ETHNICALLY, FRETELIN LEADERSHIP TENDED TO BE MORE PORTUGUESE THAN TIMORESE.

7. THE SYDDELLS BOTH HAD DRAWN UP STATEMENTS ON EAT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 USUN N 01483 100329Z

TIMOR WHICH THEY EXPECTED WOULD BE CIRCULATED AS UN DOCUMENTS. THESE ARE TRANSMITTED BY SEPTTEL. BUT HAVE NOT, AS YET AT LEAST, BEEN CIRCULATED AS UN DOCUMENTS.

8. COMMENT: PRIOR TO OUR MEETING WITH THE SYDDELLS, JOEWONO GAVE LUNCHEON AT WHICH THEY MET REPRESENTATIVES OF SOME OTHER MISSIONS. ACCORDING TO A FRENCH COLLEAGUE, SYDDELL SPOKE ALMOST TOO STRONGLY TO BE FULLY CONVINCING.

WHEN WE MET HIM, SYDDELL SPOKE UNEMOTIONALLY AND IN RELATIVELY
LOW KEY. INDONESIA'S AMBASSADOR SANI HAS INDICATED TO US
THAT HE SENSES SYDDELL MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY CONVINCING
TO ALL. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, THEREFORE, HOW SANI WILL
EIMPLOY SYDDELLS IN FORTHCOMING UN SECURITY COUNCIL DEBATE.
THERE ARE INDICATIONS HE MAY NOT.
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